#GamerGate: August 2014 Revisited

(Edit: Corrected a few mistakes with formatting, grammar, and spelling.

Edit 2: Corrected the 8/30 Techraptor entry to state it was unrelated and added in an entry for 8/27 for Idle Thumbs)

On August 27th, 2014, Adam Baldwin created the #GamerGate hashtag on Twitter.

Here we are, entering Year 3. A lot has been written and a lot of revisionism has been done. Some intentional though most is due to ignorance as the rabbit hole goes deep and the “good guys” quickly begin to lose that shine as you dig further in.

I’d like to revisit August 2014 with all the information we know today. Some of it came out after the fact as proof that there was always more to meet the eye. To the best of my knowledge, this is a first: almost everything written after the first three months has been an outsider-looking-in, handwaving the finer details, or ignoring the actual historical record; I’d like to change that by flipping all three. Nobody references the old 4chan threads unless it’s as a convenient vector for attacks. No major efforts to piece together later bits and put them on the timeline. The mod logs for reddit and 4chan have gone from a bit of drama to forgotten within two months. None of the information I’m about to reference is new, only forgotten, ignored, or never pieced together. The two main things I intentionally did not included are the reddit mod logs and the 4chan mod logs, both because they’re each so time consuming to go through and all I’d establish is what’s already clear: they hated everything to do with this story and actively tried to ban it. I’ll check them out later if people want their contents added, I’m sure there’s other stuff I’ve forgotten that will be anyway, I’d just like to get this out of Editing Hell.

Let’s begin.

August 11th:

Depression Quest awkwardly releases on the day of Robin Williams’ suicide. Not a lot of fanfare on the game itself is had but the Zoe vs Wizardchan story gains more exposure. People begin learning about Depression Quest’s past: When it was in Steam Greenlight, accusations were made that Wizardchan, a forum primarily with men who have deep depression, severe anxiety, and suicidal tendencies, had been framed as harassing Zoe Quinn. These accusations were made by her and reinforced by certain gaming press with no evidence beyond Zoe’s words/writings.

August 16th:

Eron writes the zoepost. The post got around the internet quickly to multiple forums, including /v/, where it was deleted multiple times before finding a temp home in /pol/ and other image boards when mods didn’t arbitrarily delete it. Grayson was

identified as one of the five early, prompting this topic on /v/: “Can anyone find any articles Grayson may have written about her or the game that show a blatant conflict of interest?” For the next 2–3 days people dig into the zoepost and any industry connections that may exist.

August 16th-17th:

Ben Kuchera, an editor at video game site Polygon, was talking to and coaching Zoe Quinn on Skype. There are two pieces of evidence to support this: a tweet by BroTeamPill and a picture of her Skype. I do not know how this picture was obtained, only that it exists and was posted in April 2015.

Archive: https://archive.is/EcIfg

August 17th:

1) MundaneMatt’s youtube video on the subject is DMCA’d. He re-uploads it a day later but the damage is done.

2) The Wizardchan story makes its way to TumblrInAction (TIA)

3) Both stories make their way to The Escapist, one of the publications that wrote about the Wizardchan event exclusively at Zoe’s word.

4) The Reddit post written by a staff member with The Fine Young Capitalists (TFYC) is made. In it, the author expresses his frustration over how their production was ruined by Zoe, how they’re blacklisted in the industry, and how she (later found to be Maya Kramer and Jonathan Ross) doxed him.

August 17th-18th:

Wolf Wozniak makes a series of tweets about his concerns and worries about being outcasted from “the really cliquey indie game dev scene” due to publicly coming out to say Zoe sexually harassed him. Phil Fish jumps in immediately, calls him “a little shit,” Wozniak immediately backpedals, apologizes, and shuts up.

Switch resolution in the URL from 800 to 2000 for best reading

August 18th:

As all three stories merge into one and spread across the internet, Internet

Aristocrat creates the first video of his Quinnspiracy Theory series (mirror here) that covers all three topics. This video quickly makes its rounds across the internet, including /r/videos.

August 19th:

1) Kyle Orland, senior game editor at Ars Technica, posts a topic in google group "Gaming Journalism Professionals," also known as "GameJournoPros" (GJP), about Zoe Quinn. Worth noting, Orland is the founder of GJP, creating it after having been inspired by JournoList.

Picture from: http://www.breitbart.com/london/2014/09/17/exposed-the-secret-mailing-list-of-the-gaming-journalism-elite/

2) Inside that GJP thread, Ben Kuchera repeatedly attempts to make Greg Tito, then editor in chief of The Escapist, remove content regarding Zoe on the Escapist's forums.

3) Inside GJP, Andrew Groen (Wired), Daniel Starkey (Wired, GameSpot, Polygon, Eurogamer), and Kyle Orland (Ars Technica) discuss creating "a 'feel better' gift… even if it's not monetary… maybe a signed, joint letter of support from the Game Journo Pros," with Orland himself adding "even better if we can get some developers in on that." Groen further establishes the message as "we're your colleagues, and we appreciate the work you do for our community," and additionally says that "we should do this entirely under the radar, organizing it through word-of-mouth and email rather than Twitter." All other members of the GJP who voiced their opinions on it strongly rejected the proposal. This bears a strong resemblance to the later journalist driven petition that would appear early next month.

4) People continue to dig into the gaming industry and begin creating infographs of their discoveries. Financial connections between journalists and developers (primarily through Patreon) are found. As an example, this was taken on August 19th, 2014. It shows Ben Kuchera backing Zoe Quinn's Patreon for 224 days and writing an article back on March 19th, 2014.

5) All of this information begins to pour out to the rest of the internet. Gamesnosh writes an article on the scandal focused on Grayson and it later appears on N4G. N4G removes it soon after as Gamesnosh tweets that the host asked them to take the article down. Tumblr was a mix of multiple ideas, with the most popular being the incestuous industry. Certain Wikipedia pages were vandalized. Anons continued to dig their heels knowing that after all the songs they've written they finally had proof of "how bullshit and toxic gaming media is."

6) TotalBiscuit (TB) writes a twitlonger about what a shitstorm this already is, saying the Streisand effect is real, and that everyone should "calm the fuck down [so]

things might become clearer.”

7) Phil Fish went through a long tirade as he called people “gross, hateful, impotent nerds” who are “a husk, filled with cheetos, and caked with semen,” “human diarrhea,” and wished “videogames [were] a building so I could burn it down with all you people in it.” He did not take the ethical concerns well.

8) Zoe’s tumblr is claimed to be “HACKED BY 4CHAN.ORG/V/” and this is posted on /v/. It is immediately condemned, in multiple threads. No ownership of any kind was taken and anyone who’s ever been anon can tell that it’s obvious falseflag to frame /v/, some saying it’s her even on tumblr. Many quickly draw parallels to what’s going on with the events that happened with Wizardchan.

9) TB’s twitlonger is posted on /v/. While people spend time shitposting (Hail Hydra), praising and hating him in back to back posts, trolling Phil Fish, mocking her professionally made nudes, and making false claims, they also answer those who ask “Who?” and claim they need to focus on the industry and not her. During this topic, her tumblr is supposedly hacked and conversation focuses on falseflags soon after. Threads get made focused on journalism, people explicitly state they’re not your personal army, and continue trying to post in between threads getting deleted on /v/, /pol/, and /b/.

10) TB’s twitlonger makes its way on r/gaming. Within two hours, hundreds of posts are deleted. Within 11 hours, Reddit deletes 20–30,000 posts as his plea falls on deaf ears.

11) Various other sites reportedly begin shutting down discussion as this banner got made, showing the lines that had generally been seen primarily on social media.

If only we knew about GJP back then

August 20th:

1) Steven Totilo, the editor in chief of Kotaku, says there’s nothing wrong with what Grayson did as the relationship was later, although people dig further into the supposed timeline.

2) Greg Tito recognizes that the story in 2013 The Escapist ran about Zoe and Wizardchan was done “with little evidence other than her word” but continues to defend it.

3) Anons continue to dig further into specific issues within the industry. One looks to Reuters. Indiecade begins getting looked at.

4) Matt, TFYC’s spokesman, releases a soundcloud explaining a bit about the project and what’s going on.

August 21st:

1) Information continues to spread primarily through social media. Tumblr has IA's video be the top result for "Zoe Quinn" multiple times.

2) More information showing Grayson had more than just a "professional relationship" prior to 3/31 appears. This time the focus was on GDC streams, specifically the "GDC BFF" and two later ones.

3) TFYC announces that 4chan was the top donor for two days in a row in their indiegogo.

4) TFYC gains notoriety on Twitter due to being a feminist effort that not only accepts 4chan's money but supports it. Ariel Connor/MissAngerist went so far as say they are accepting donations from "the CATHEDRAL of misogyny," the basis for new content and a song. Amidst this drama, /v/ chooses that their share of the profits should go to colon cancer so they can "chemo butthurt."

5) People on Twitter continue to try to move the discussion forward. As Lo-Ping puts it:

"Forget about the sex. Whether or not sex was used as currency isn't the issue. It's that people with influence had an inappropriate relationship with Quinn (sexual or friendly) that gave the impression of cronyism or favoritism, rather than recusing themselves."

August 22nd:

1) Vivian James is made and is accepted by TFYC.

2) The video series that /v/ chose for TFYC to talk about was "talk about great female developers." Roberta Williams was first. Also mentioned was that they had given $5,000 in one day.

2) Internet Aristocrat creates the second video in Quinnspiracy Theory (mirror here).

3) People dig further into Patreon connections and try to sort out what role everyone has. Journalists, writers, developers, award hosts/judges, etc are all examined.

4) Phil Fish's company, Polytron, is hacked. 1.5GB of data comes out showing inner financials of the company, including financial backers of Fez. The hacker claims to be "the head mod over at /V/ and leader of 4chan.org and Anonymous."

August 24th:

1) The KotakuInAction subreddit is made. It debuts with 1,524 unique (IPs) and 3942 pageviews. These and later numbers can be found here.

2) Devin Faraci: people against Zoe and Anita are “zealots. ISIS with Steam accounts” and that he “has more respect for ISIS than anti-Quinn people.”

3) Details of the relationship between Kotaku writer Patricia Hernandez and indie gamedev Anna Anthropy are made. In it, Hernandez repeatedly praises and pushes for Anna’s games to be sold, now known close friend and ex-roommate. She dismisses the finding at the bottom of the infograph.

4) The relationship between Zoe Quinn and Robin Arnott, one of the Five Guys, is further examined due to the fact that he was an organizer and judge for IndieCade. It’s discovered that in the year Depression Quest won IndieCade’s Night Games 2013, an award previously won by games such as Cannon Brawl, Crypt of the NecroDancer, and Papers, Please, Arnott was the chair of Night Games.

5) TFYC has their indiegogo hacked by someone claiming to be /V/. Matt oddly calms people down with a four hour talk of feminism.

6) After a week of circling the wagon on Twitter, Boogie directly addresses the Zoe Quinn scandal and begins trying to to call for moderation.

“That’s not the issue and I’m not here to offer an opinion about Zoe Quinn’s character. I don’t know her, I’ll never know her, don’t care to get to know her. What I’m concerned about is she had a lot of influence on gaming journalism… never trust anything blindly, that is just a life fact. And if Zoe Quinn is the one who made you realize that, she made you a big favor.”

August 25th:

1) Reddit’s /r/games allows a post regarding the ongoing controversy. It brings up two people with clear conflicts of interests: Patricia Hernandez of Kotaku with Anna Anthropy and Ben Kuchera with Zoe Quinn.

2) A second video in TFYC’s series of women in game design is made, this time focused on Corrinne Yu.

3) TFYC’s indiegogo is restored and 4chan’s contributions surpass $13,000.

4) Anita Sarkeesian releases Tropes vs Women: Women as Background Decorations 2.

5) JonTron talks at length on the Co-Optional Podcast 47 about his frustrations with

the past two weeks with TotalBiscuit, Jesse Cox, and Dodger. He states that he's not sure how to deal with people who call him all sorts of things anymore. TB summarized the biggest complaint early: "[the] biggest problem I have with this discussion is that we can't have this discussion." Jesse Cox further states a problem the rest agree on:

"Most people weigh what the argument is and come in on a side rather than actually have an opinion… they will side with someone… because it seems like a safe choice… rather than sticking to their morals. They're like 'I'm going to go in on this side, and I'm going to agree with this person,' but if you're with them in private? They're a totally different person. (Exactly!) Because for PR reasons they go in on the side of whatever is easiest to defend."

August 26:

1) Ariel Connor/MissAngerist writes a twitlonger where she apologizes to TFYC and 4chan, on how the lines are blurred, how people on "her" side are behaving badly, and how she needs to say this anonymously or else she may lose her job. This surprises many anons: "We have more in common than we realize. And if we worked together, the people at the top trying to corrupt the discourse of gaming would lose their power and their clique would die out."

2) Patricia Hernandez has another conflict of interest found, this time with her having promoted the games of Christine Love, who she had dated in the past. This is added to the Patricia Hernandez infograph and is posted on KotakuInAction.

3) Alexander Sliwinski, then news director of Joystiq, tweets about their policy regarding Kickstarter and Patreon.

Archive: https://archive.is/lvcl2

4) Stephen Totilo writes about Patreon being different than Kickstarter and agrees that there's a perceived conflict of interest. He further clarifies that "questions about Patricia's articles about Anna Anthropy and Christine Love's games were part of what I was reacting to." Inside GJP, Kyle Orland, Britton Peele, and Scott Nichols privately comment on it, split on how to view it.

5) Christopher Grant, editor in chief of Polygon, writes about Patreon will now require disclosure.

August 27th:

Adam Baldwin posts IA's videos and tags it as #GamerGate.

2) Adam Baldwin also backs the TFYC indiegogo

3) Idle Thumbs releases episode 173, “Ridonkulous Rift,” where over a third of their 77 minutes is spent discussing recent events. They dismiss objections to journalistic breaches of ethics, describe it as an “ouroboros of garbage,” and may have the first recorded frustration over how “there’s always eight more anime avatared guys who pop out” in relation to these events.

August 28th:

1) Total Biscuit tries to calm people down again and releases a blogpost with matching, jazzy soundcloud where he reads the contents aloud.

2) TFYC makes their third and last video of women in game design, ending with Anna Kipnis.

3) SdoctmdPlays, a social justice activist who had been seeing the past two weeks unfold, writes a detailed twitlonger expressing concerns over Eron’s treatment and how he appears to be the forgotten victim. In this twitlonger, deeper concerns over social justice are stated: how the low entry barrier allows opportunists, people who would exploit and manipulate others in its name, and how it makes people forget that harassment is harassment.

4) Brad Wardell, CEO of Stardock, writes an article on his personal blog where he blames “the tabloidiziation of the gaming media,” “professional victims,” and “unaccountability” as the “3 things that have made gaming social media more toxic.”

3) Roughly a dozen articles are posted within a 24 hour period saying it’s the end of gamers, that gamers are over, that the gamer identity is dead. A list with date and time can be found on KotakuInAction. For this day we have:

‘Gamers’ don’t have to be your audience. ‘Gamers’ are over. (Leigh Alexander, Gamasutra, Aug 28, 10:00am)

Put The Hate on Hold (Fenriff, Destructoid Blog, Aug 28, 12:09pm)

An awful week to care about video games (Chris Plante, Polygon, Aug 28, 1:21pm)

A Disheartening Account Of The Harassment Going On In Gaming Right Now (And How Adam Baldwin Is Involved) (Victoria McNally, The Mary Sue, Aug 28, 1:30pm)

The death of the “gamers” and the women who “killed” them (Casey Johnson, Ars Technica, Aug 28, 5:00pm)

A Guide to Ending “Gamers” (Devin Wilson, Gamasutra, Aug 28, 7:57 pm)

We Might Be Witnessing The ‘Death of An Identity’ (Luke Plunkett, Kotaku, Aug 28,

8:00pm)

Gaming Is Leaving “Gamers” Behind (Joseph Bernstein, Buzzfeed, Aug 28, 8:29 pm)

Sexism, Misogyny, and online attacks: It’s a horrible time to consider yourself a gamer (Patrick O’Rourke, Financial Post, Aug 28, 9:33pm)

It’s Dangerous to Go Alone: Why Are Gamers So Angry? (Arthur Chu, The Daily Beast, Aug 28, time unknown)

The End of Gamers (Dan Golding, Tumblr, Aug 28, time unknown)

4) Feminist scholar Christina Hoff Sommers chimes in on the gaming situation, saying not to confuse gamers with trolls.

August 29th:

1) One of the few interviews with Eron painted somewhat sympathetically come out as everyone in GJP expresses intense hatred or dismissal. The most angry is posted below, by a Senior Reviewer at Polygon. It’s agreed on by her senior editor, Phillip Kollar. “Fuck that guy” is explicitly stated by then managing editor of Joystiq, Susan Arendt, and Ben Kuchera as well.

2) The #GamerGate hashtag grows to 10,000 tweets. It and other numbers can be found in the cat here.

3) As a result of the articles coming one after the other, people are extremely suspicious, believe that this is a coordinated attack, and understand that this is an attack against gamers. /v/ begins to organize around the way they can fight back: hitting advertisers.

3) Three more Gamers Are Dead articles come out.

Announcement: Readers who feel threatened by equality no longer welcome (Tim Colwill, GamesONnet, Aug 29, 1:37pm)

The End of Gatekeeping: The Extinction Burst of Gaming Culture (Dr. Nerdlove, Doctor Nerd Love, Aug 29, time unknown)

This guy’s embarassing relationship drama is killing the ‘gamer’ identity (Mike Pearl, Vice, Aug 29, time unknown)

August 30th:

1) Alexander Macris, co-founder of The Escapist, posts in The Escapist’s thread

discussing the controversy. “We do not believe that gamer culture needs to die because non-gamers play games anymore than we believe gearhead culture needs to die because non-gearheads drive cars or foodie culture needs to die because non-foodies eat.”

2) With #GamerGate having formed and multiple articles stating the gamer identity is over and dead, another Twitlonger by MissAngerist is made.

“Journalists, instead of dividing up your audience and stoking the flames of conflict, you should be bringing people together. It’s disingenuous to stereotype gamers just as it is disingenuous for gamers to attack women.”

3) An infograph comparing standards by The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and Polygon’s latest appears, establishing further evidence that ethical reform remains an ongoing concern.

4) The #GamerGate hashtag skyrockets up to 50,000 tweets.

5) TechRaptr’s reddit account gets banned. UPDATE: This was explained as part of Reddit’s rules and not related to #GamerGate.

6) MundaneMatt looks into the conflict of interest between Leigh Alexander and her gaming consulting firm, Agency For Games.

7) Boogie makes a video rejecting the “gamers are dead” articles in making a call to peace.

“…we have fought for years to make the term ‘gamer’ not a negative connotation… and now the media and the internet is trying to re-apply all of these negative stereotypes all over again because of a vocal minority and it’s a really bad thing. Just because you write ‘gamers are dying’ doesn’t make it true… I’ve been here for a really long time and me and my friends? We’re not going anywhere. We love games and we’re always going to love games, and that’s part of who we are, and I think most of us are proud of it.”

7) Another entry to Gamers Are Dead:

Why we need more developers like Zoe Quinn (Dan Whitehead, Eurogamer, Aug 30, time unknown)

August 31st:

1) Reddit cracks down on #GamerGate and anything related, liberally throwing shadowbans out in /r/gaming and /r/Games.

2) KotakuInAction grows from 2674 uniques and 21,852 pageviews to 28,954

uniques and 105,248 pageviews overnight.

3) As one of the few who can speak to everyone on all sides, Boogie continues to try to bridge the gap.

4) Operation Disrespectful Nod, a campaign to pull advertisement from corrupt and unethical sites, is outlined and publicly released.

5) Another entry to Gamers Are Dead.

The Sorry State Of Gaming's Truthers And Their #Gamergate (Tadhg Kelly, Gamasutra, Aug 31, 11:57am)

By the end of August, what I like to think of as "Chapter 1" of this drama ended. It should be noted that 4chan's late August 2014 material is a bit harder to find so part of this is lacking. There are also many, many Twitter reactions that I could include but don't want to make an infinitely long document, though I no doubt should include some that I forgot about.

Based on the information above I would cite the influence of TFYC as one of the biggest turning points of August. The story gets a lot weirder, attitudes become a lot calmer (though the extra few days to calm down no doubt played a role in this), and people begin having fun. As one scrolls through their tumblr, it's telling that two weeks of contact changed more minds and created better discussion than five years of yelling "It's Misogyny!" but this lesson appears to have been ignored. Press chose to instead triple down on those cries, ultimately forcing what was In There to be Everywhere.

And we're in a better world because of that.

Special thanks:

Holiday Anon. After all this time, your backup was finally used.

William Usher. Your articles for mid-late August articles were a massive help to piecing together the timeline and got me to some nice OC.

Know Your Meme. Best wiki source for this. Thanks to you I got to piece together some stuff that I didn't know when it happened exactly.

All the anons who've done /v/ and GamerGate musicals. You weren't just scattered throughout this, you were my playlist.